


<i>Meeting Notes</i>		<i>Downtown Action Team</i> <i>March 3, 2005</i> <i>8:00 a.m.</i> <i>Cornhusker Conference Center</i> <i>Yankee Hill Room - 333 S. 13th Street</i>	
			
<i>Members</i>	Jon Camp Jim Fram Lynn Green (absent) Matt Harris Deb Johnson Jessica Kennedy Dan Massoth Lori McClug	Annette McRoy Sachit Nadkarni Will Scott Kent Seacrest Nader Sepahpur Mike Sisk Clay Smith (absent)	Cecil Steward Jane Stricker Ed Swotek Becky Van de Bogart Michelle Waite Jon Weinberg Terry Werner
<i>Others Present</i>	Don Arambula Brenda Bergman David Cary Carol Connor George Crandall Tad Fraizer Karl Fredrickson Ann Harrell	Randy Hoskins Lynn Johnson Marvin Krout Dallas McGee Polly McMullen Benjamin Morgan Kent Morgan Brian Praeuner	Mayor Seng Ken Smith Mike Tavlin (<i>on behalf of DAT member Clay Smith</i>) Myrna Tewes Marc Wullschleger Michele Abendroth

Co-Chair Jon Weinberg called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Those present introduced themselves.

Kent Morgan presented a list of organizations that were informed of the Downtown Master Plan process and ideas presented at the November 30th workshop. He noted that the conversations have been very positive, and there is strong support for downtown and the plan. Obviously there are concerns but there are very positive things. One of the biggest concerns is the idea of change. As we tell them of the process, that is mitigated through continued conversation. One of the common questions is how this process will affect my lifestyle. There is a keen interest in retail in downtown. People have embraced the idea that downtown is a unique mixed use area. People realize that the public sector and private sector investment is important. The Haymarket has raised a lot of questions. Finances are always a concern of course. Lastly, people on the whole have been very supportive and want to be a part of the process.

George Crandall stated that the first part of the meeting will be a PowerPoint presentation which outlines some of the issues. Following the presentation will be discussion, including retail possibilities, other issues, final products and design guidelines.

In terms of the schedule, we are on schedule. The issue is when to have the next workshop. He then reviewed the definition of planning. Planning is about strategic public investment to stimulate private investments. They are often asked “Why plan?” Basically it is because attractive cities will thrive and the unattractive ones will not. Economics Research Associates (ERA) has stated that improving the urban environment is an important part of the picture.

They are also asked “Where have cities been successful?” A good example is outlined in the tape *Back from the Brink*. All successful cities all use the same recipe. They saved the downtown first and created a 24-hour city, with not only housing in the downtown, but retail and entertainment. They also all made extraordinary efforts to make the downtown pedestrian friendly.

In answering the question, “What features are most important?”, they find that creating great streets in the downtown is critical. Forty percent of the land in the downtown is in the streets, and about 60% in private ownership. Therefore, one needs to take care of the public realm.

The second feature that is important is great retail. The traditional main street is edge to edge retail. When it was done the right way, it was successful. This formula has never changed. Main street without parking causes the retail to fail. One-sided retail is also very anemic. You need a two-sided main street. Discontinuous retail is always anemic. We see this in many cities including Lincoln, because you compromise the pedestrian environment.

The third feature that becomes extremely important is to have shopper-friendly parking. This is often forgotten in downtowns. Parking must be easy to get to and easy to circulate around in.

The fourth feature is the public square and open space.

ERA has made some projections about the amount of new development. This informs us about how the downtown might be configured, not only in the short term but the long term as well. ERA feels there is a demand for another 2 million square feet of office space, another 2000 units for residential, another 600,000 square feet of retail and another 1000 hotel rooms by 2025. ERA also looked at the strategic retail opportunities. They identified three areas for retail including the Haymarket, the neighborhood market place and the retail revitalization district. They think we are nicely positioned to be specific on the recommendations and have an effective implementation strategy.

Mr. Crandall then reviewed the results of the response sheet from the third downtown community workshop. They feel we are in good shape with the potential land uses. They want to come back to the retail concept as they believe there may be some concerns with the proposed location on P Street. In terms of open space, they think the concept presented is very realistic and people were in favor of the concept. They feel that if we are serious about the retail concept, at least one block of Centennial Mall must be opened up to traffic. The M Street park block concept received general approval. Generally, the public was in favor of the arts corridor. The on-street and off-street bike systems, the shuttle system, the streetcar route and the bus transfer facility were generally supported.

There were a couple proposals for the rail yards. One is for housing and open space and the other is the convention center, parking and open space. People were split on these choices.

In terms of retail, they feel another 350,000 square feet is key. They looked at the potential for continuous retail and the traffic volumes on P Street. P Street has 12,000-16,000 cars on it, which is good for retail. They then looked at O Street for retail, but they found there are very few opportunities for new retail on O Street, although there are some opportunities for rehabilitation. Traffic volumes are also very high for retail use. Next, they looked at N Street. There are more opportunities for rehabilitation. Traffic volumes are on the low end, but as you start to develop the area, you would see traffic volumes increase.

They then looked at how much space is available. There is not a lot of opportunity for new retail on P Street, as only 24,000 square feet of new space has been identified. There is 112,000 square feet of existing and renovated space.

There is a critical mass that is necessary to attract people into downtown. On O Street, there is 22,000 square feet of new space and 197,000 square feet of existing and renovated space. N Street has the potential for 251,000 square feet for new space and 118,000 square feet for existing and renovated space. Although the potential is there, it is disconnected from the Haymarket, the University and from the shopping on P Street. In talking with ERA, they determined that N Street is not the right location. So they went back to looking at P, simply because it is where the activity is now. They looked at ways to join it with 9th and 10th Streets and play off the Haymarket. There may be some opportunity there. They are looking for a solution and are seeking input.

Crandall noted that one of the refinements is what happens between 11th and 12th Streets next to the church. They feel it could be a possible location for the library. They also feel the Pershing site is a possible location for the library.

With respect to the next steps, they are suggesting to come back to this committee in approximately a month when they have more details on the retail as well as traffic and transportation in the Haymarket area and then have the public workshop.

Crandall then opened the meeting up for discussion.

Nader Sepahpur stated that one of the greatest problems on O Street is that the federal parking lot hinders any growth. Crandall stated that they agree and they are proposing other uses for that site.

Terry Werner asked what happened to the anchor on the east side of P Street. Crandall stated that the historical museum does not want to move. Arambula added that even with the museum, we are still short on retail space on P Street.

Crandall stated that they have had a number of conversations with Bill Lee of ERA. There are not a lot of options, and that is why they looked at the other three streets. They also looked at

the north-south streets, specifically 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th. While one wants to see retail and entertainment on those streets, they do not lend themselves to an obvious solution. The most obvious solution is to go with P Street and its connection to the Haymarket and its proximity to the University.

Cecil Steward stated that they began this process thinking of downtown Lincoln as a single retail street. He questioned why we cannot think about it as a three-street solution. Crandall stated that you need a signature retail street to be convincing in the downtown. It is tough enough to get one street right, let alone three streets. That is why they have proposed a primary street and secondary retail streets. In the absence of the primary retail street, nothing works well and everything is anemic. Arambula added that there is a specific role for the other streets.

Crandall stated that in terms of design standards they suggest requiring edge to edge retail on the lower level. On the other streets, the requirements would be active street frontage.

Polly McMullen asked what happens to the retail capacity if we are not able to achieve 350,000 square feet of retail. Crandall stated that a lot of it would not happen. In the absence of designating where this street is and being very specific about the edges, it means that over a period of time that potential will be eroded. What has happened on P Street is that a lot of the potential has already been eroded. It is a natural thing, and they see it happening everywhere. They are trying to get out in front of growth and shape it in your vision. Arambula added that if the retail does not happen in downtown, it will happen somewhere else in Lincoln. This will create more competition on the edge that is going to take the market share from downtown. Crandall stated that in the absence of retail in downtown, you will not see the housing that is projected. It will also not be as attractive for offices and employment. Everything then will suffer. You cannot build a downtown without retail. They find that employers do not want to be in downtowns where there is no retail. People want to live in places where they can live, work and shop. The retail becomes the central piece, and it is also the most difficult piece to get right. Arambula stated that there needs to be a critical mass that will help drive the retail. Ann Harrell asked why retail is so hard to achieve. Crandall responded that it is simply because of the physical limitations of space.

Jon Camp stated that he feels the downtown shuttle concept is important to be able to transport people up and down these areas. He feels transportation is the key to get people to these places. Crandall stated that shuttles are important, although they are not the whole answer. People are only comfortable walking one-quarter of a mile. Arambula added that there needs to be a compact retail corridor.

Lynn Johnson asked what the recommendation is for the vacant theaters. Crandall stated that it needs to be redeveloped for retail.

Johnson also asked about turning the square on 13th and P into retail. Crandall stated that losing the square needs to be carefully considered as it is a signature piece and a focal point. But if we get serious with the retail, then we could consider it.

Michelle Waite commented that north of O Street is a much more vibrant atmosphere. She feels P Street is the right location for retail.

Will Scott stated that he also feels that P Street is the right location. The theaters are a huge opportunity to have a big impact in a short amount of time. Crandall stated that the theaters are key, and they are meeting with the theater owners tomorrow. Arambula added that they like P Street because of the connection to the Haymarket. The question they are asking if they are missing any opportunity to find more retail space. Scott added that he likes having it close to the University and the Haymarket.

Jessica Kennedy asked that if the museum were to move, as she feels the cultural aspect would be missing. Crandall stated that one would like to see it stay in the downtown because you want many options for activity in downtown. We also need to recognize that it is not a large attractor. It could possibly go in the Pershing site, which is also a possible location for the library. He feels that if it were to move, we need to identify a placeholder for them in downtown.

Werner asked what possibilities there are for 9th and 10th Streets to cross into the Haymarket. Crandall stated that there are a number of options, which they will bring back to the committee. The first thing is to downsize the road, if possible. Secondly, they want to look at making it more pedestrian friendly. There are a number of things to do, but they are still a compromise. Overpasses do not work well. Another option is to depress the roadways. They are looking at some very aggressive possibilities, as well as some rather modest ones.

Sepahpur stated that there are some nice opportunities without the anchor and advised that we should let the market place develop. He feels we should concentrate on doing the things that are achievable rather than on the placement for the anchor and the museum. Arambula stated that it is important to identify the retail because a developer may be interested in the long-term plans for a block. The key is to be certain that you are protecting the right places.

Deb Johnson stated that she supports the open space concept. Having the 13th and P public use space is very important and adds to the synergy of the downtown.

Jim Fram stated the north half of the block on N between 11th and 12th was originally shown as an events park and today it is being shown as a potential library site. He asked why that half block is tied for redevelopment. Crandall stated that they are not saying those uses are inappropriate. The library is looking for 150,000 square feet, which would need to be on four floors. They feel the library would fit nicely on that site.

Steward stated that the validity of P Street as the market place street focus is still as valid as it was in the beginning. There are more things happening to strengthen that concept with Antelope Valley and the Haymarket concept growing. He feels that getting aggressive would include design standards. It does not mean that every building on P Street needs to be preserved. He would like to think in terms of what it takes for the whole package.

Crandall then asked the committee members to give their insight on the retail strategy.

Waite stated that she agrees with Steward's comments.

Annette McRoy stated that she feels the plan is very "doable". We need to craft our own vision even though we may not have the same attractors as some other communities. Making the plan very public could be the key to getting some of these things done.

Mike Sisk agrees that P Street has to be the retail location. There are some historical buildings that need to be identified at some point in time to ensure that they are a part of the plan and used accordingly.

Jane Stricker stated that there is such great potential in downtown. She believes it is important to have the anchor at the historical museum.

Scott stated that he likes P Street for the retail corridor. The cultural piece is very important, but he feels there is a better location for the museum.

Ed Swotek stated that he agrees that P Street is the right location and believes that we need to leverage our creativity.

McMullen stated that she agrees that P Street is the logical choice for the retail corridor. If we achieve this, everything else in the plan becomes more achievable.

Weinberg agrees that P Street is the logical choice.

Marvin Krout noted that he believes we are missing opportunities. There are similar cities who have become more vibrant, and he feels we need to become more aggressive. The key is having continuous ground-floor retail frontage. We also need to deal with the intimidation factor of 9th and 10th Streets.

Werner stated that he feels that 9th and 10th Streets are a critical issue, and we need to be creative. He agrees that P Street is the right location. He is concerned about preservation and design standards. He added that Lincoln needs an identity, and we need to take great care in preserving our historical buildings. He feels the square is critical to the plan, but questions the financial aspect.

Harrell asked the consultants to comment on moving the location of the square to Centennial Mall. Crandall stated that the right location for the square is on 13th Street because it needs to be in the center, not on the edge. Centennial Mall is not an active crossroads.

Werner commented that we need to address the connectivity to Antelope Valley.

Deb Johnson remarked that this process has been good and very public. Although there are challenges, we need to move forward and educate our community. She feels the public square is very important, and we need to let the community know how it can be funded.

Kent Seacrest stated that P Street is the right location. Concentrating on the University and giving it that younger flavor is important. Large anchor sites are difficult, so getting the retail continuity with smaller stores may be better. He feels that Q Street could be tied in as well.

Mike Tavlin stated that he feels P Street is the right location. This is a very long-range plan, and we need to consider how to protect that vision.

Dan Massoth agrees with all the comments that have been made. He believes that we need to be aggressive. The 9th and 10th Street connectivity is a key part of the plan.

Kennedy stated that P Street is the right location. By developing strategy built on research and input, it will provide a gateway for the next 25 years.

Camp questioned why we want to put a public plaza where there are three businesses now. He suggested building on the successes we have and not displacing people. The transportation loop in downtown is critical.

The group recessed for approximately 10 minutes at 10:00 a.m., reconvening at 10:12 a.m.

Crandall stated that the next agenda item is to have open discussion on the library site.

Carol Connor stated that there are 393,000 visitors to the downtown library each year. There is a downward trend for people using the main library, and one major factor is parking. She believes that people in Lincoln will not use a parking garage. It is not a site location issue, but a parking issue. Crandall stated that parking is critical, but the issue is if it should be on-site, off-site or shared parking. Connor stated that they need approximately 150-180 parking stalls. She stated that there is a parking garage across the street, but the customers do not use it. The Library Board does not have a preference for a site. Their vision is 150,000 square feet with parking and some historical reference. Lynn Johnson asked if it is the issue of paying for parking. Connor stated that it is the issue of being enclosed in.

Swotek asked if it would be possible to house the library and historical museum together in the Pershing center. Van de Bogart added that she feels that would be great as it would be an educational center and a destination for students. She agrees that an open parking garage would work better.

Steward commented that it would be a waste of useful resources to take the Pershing auditorium down. It is a building owned by the City. It has the advantage of being accessible, and it has huge volume. It will take some major dollars to use that structure, but it does not need to look like the auditorium that it is now to accommodate those needs.

Deb Johnson stated that she appreciates the fact that they have worked so hard on finding the open space. They are now trying to find the reality. Logistically they have some problems with their current location. They have been approached by the Capitol Environs Commission who would like to have them on Centennial Mall. Centennial Mall has many advantages, but there

are also concerns. Crandall stated that Centennial Mall could work well if it was designed to accommodate that function.

Scott reiterated the fact there is a lot of potential with the Harris Overpass and a gateway entrance into Lincoln.

Swotek stated that he wants to emphasize that this is not a 20 year plan; rather, he believes it is a 50-75 year plan. He believes the north Haymarket area has huge potential and ties in with the Harris Overpass. We need to have a “home run” that we can build on.

Weinberg asked if they believe ridership would increase with a streetcar as opposed to a bus. Crandall stated that the streetcar is an investment stimulator. Arambula stated the reality is that some people will ride a streetcar but not a bus, as the streetcar is seen as a kind of premium service.

Steward stated that he recently attended a public activity in Lincoln and the first questions had to do with Antelope Valley. Coverage and participation in the process has been tremendous, but there are still questions. He asked how to keep the downtown process in the public realm. Crandall stated that it is always a concern and maintaining momentum is very important. Institutional memory is very important too. There are reports that only cost pennies to produce and can be placed in public spaces. It is a summary plan typically of four or five pages. The other thing that is important is that unless there are design guidelines, a downtown does not stand a chance of holding on to your vision. It provides developer certainty and simplifies the process. Arambula added that it is important to have implementation strategies.

Lynn Johnson stated that we need to figure out some strategies for the initial implementation, look at how to fund the day-to-day operations and maintenance, and look at funding for replacement and rehabilitation.

Crandall stated that the master plan will consist of an executive summary, the background, the public realm framework, the land use framework, and an implementation piece. They will prioritize the projects, identify the costs associated with the projects, describe how to organize to make it happen, and identify the policies and regulations needed. The final piece is the action plan. Arambula added that the status of the plan needs to be reported on in 120 days.

Crandall then directed the discussion to development guidelines. There are several pieces including the character of Lincoln, creating a good pedestrian environment, architectural guidelines, lighting and signage. They will provide a document to the committee. Arambula stated that the intent is not to limit creativity but to encourage architectural innovation. It is important to have this because it aspires to what we want to be.

Crandall continued by stating that they want the committee’s input on the next steps in the process. He suggested delaying the fourth workshop so they can develop some refinements on the retail strategy and the circulation system. They want to ensure that the final document is highly credible and all options have been covered. They feel they need more time to do this.

Weinberg stated that he has no problem with the delay. There was general agreement from the committee with this suggestion.

Werner stated that timing is everything in a process such as this. There is a significant budget shortfall in the City. This plan will be presented to the public during the City's budgeting process. He is concerned with the public perception. Crandall stated that cost is always a concern, and it should be presented as a menu of selections over a period of time. The costs also need to be attached to a return. Typically they look for \$6 of private investment with \$1 of public investment. Arambula stated that this concern is not uncommon. The danger is adding it all up. They use the analogy of selecting items off a menu. Steward stated that it is practical politics, and we need to carefully consider this concern if we want the plan to be as influential as it can be. It is a matter of communication. Swotek added that it is not only the communication and financing, but the whole packaging and marketing of the plan.

Seacrest asked about opening up Centennial Mall. Crandall stated that he believes the feeling of the group is that they want P Street to work, and to see if it can work without opening up that circulation. But if we need to open it up, then they will come back with a strong recommendation that Centennial Mall be opened up for traffic in order to reinforce the retail strategy.

McMullen stated that they will advise the committee on future meeting dates as soon as they are scheduled.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

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